

We claim:

1. An inventory control system adapted to contain and store items, comprising:

(A) a plurality of receptacles each having an interior adapted to receive a selected quantity of the items therein and having a mouth operative to permit access to the interior thereof; and

(B) a lock member adapted to lock two of said receptacles together in a stacked array to define a joined state such that there is a lower receptacle and an upper receptacle, said lock member being operative to prevent access to the interior of said lower receptacle when in the joined state, said lock member including a portion that can be separated thereby to release the lower and upper receptacles from one another and allow access to the interior of said lower container.

2. An inventory control system according to claim 1 wherein said receptacles each have a surrounding side wall and a bottom wall opposite the mouth.

3. An inventory control system according to claim 1 wherein said receptacles are constructed as tubular members of a selected cross-section and including a surrounding side wall with opposite open ends, said lock member including a central wall that defines a transverse wall for adjacent receptacles when in the joined state.

4. An inventory control system according to claim 1 wherein said receptacles threadably mate with one another.

5. An inventory control system according to claim 4 wherein each said receptacle includes a container portion and a threaded mouth portion joined thereto.

6. An inventory control system according to claim 5 wherein said lock member is adapted to threadably mate onto said threaded mouth portion.

7. An inventory control system according to claim 6 wherein each said receptacle is provided with radially outwardly projecting first teeth, said lock member including radially inwardly projecting second teeth disposed on said tear-away portion and adapted to interlock with said first teeth in the joined state.

8. An inventory control system according to claim 6 wherein each said receptacle includes a container portion, said mouth portion joined thereto and extending coaxially therewith to form a shoulder, each said receptacle including a plurality of first teeth disposed on said shoulder and projecting longitudinally thereof,

said lock member including longitudinally oriented second teeth disposed on said tear-away portion and adapted to interlock with said first teeth in the joined state.

9. An inventory control system according to claim 1 wherein said lock member is adhered to said receptacle at an end opposite the mouth thereof.

10. An inventory control system according to claim 1 wherein each said receptacle is provided with a plurality of eyelets, said lock member being at least one cable tie sized and adapted to extend through the eyelets on the upper and lower receptacles.

11. An inventory control system according to claim 1 wherein each said receptacle includes a circumferential first outer ridge projecting outwardly therefrom, said first outer ridge having a ramp face and a locking face, said lock member including a circumferential first inner ridge projecting inwardly therefrom, said first inner ridge having a ramp face and a locking face such that, when a respective said locking member may be advanced onto a respective said receptacle, said ramp faces engage one another until said locking faces advance past one another, said locking faces thereafter engaging one another to prevent separation of said locking member from said receptacle.

12. An inventory control system according to claim 11 wherein said first inner ridge is disposed on said tear-away portion.

13. An inventory control system according to claim 11 wherein said first outer ridge is located proximately to the mouth of said receptacle, each said receptacle includes a circumferential second outer ridge located proximately to a second end portion of said receptacle opposite the mouth, said second outer ridge projecting outwardly therefrom and having a ramp face and a locking face, said lock member including a circumferential second inner ridge projecting inwardly therefrom, said second inner ridge having a ramp face and a locking face such that a respective said locking member may be advanced onto an adjacent pair of said receptacles with the said ramp faces on said locking member respectively engaging the ramp faces on said first and second outer ridges until the respective said locking faces advance past one another, said locking faces thereafter engaging one another to prevent separation of said locking member from said adjacent pair of said receptacles and thereby prevent separation of said adjacent pair of receptacles.

14. An inventory control system according to claim 13 wherein each said locking member includes first and second tear-away portions, said first and second inner ridges being disposed respectively on said first and second tear-away portions.

15. An inventory control system according to claim 13 including a lid member adapted to be selectively secured to and removed from each of said receptacles thereby respectively to enclose and permit access to the interior thereof, said lid member being formed of a resilient material and is operative to snap fit onto said first outer ridge.

16. An inventory control system according to claim 1 including a lid member adapted to be selectively secured to and removed from each of said receptacles thereby respectively to enclose and permit access to the interior thereof.

17. An inventory control system according to claim 1 wherein said receptacles have a geometric cross-section selected from a group consisting of circles, ovals and polygons.

18. An inventory control system adapted to contain and store a selected quantity of items, comprising:

(A) a plurality of receptacles each including a bottom wall and a surrounding side wall to form a container portion having an interior adapted to receive a selected quantity of the items therein and having a mouth portion joined to said container portion and extending coaxially therewith to form a shoulder at a junction of said mouth portion and said container portion, said mouth portion provided with a mouth wall operative to permit access to the interior;

(B) a lock member adapted to lock two of said receptacles together in a stacked array to define a joined state such that there is a lower receptacle and an upper receptacle with said lock member being operative to prevent access to the interior of said lower receptacle when in the joined state, said lock member including a tear-away portion that can be removed thereby to release the lower and upper receptacles from one another and allow access to the interior of said lower container; and

(C) a lid member adapted to be selectively secured to and removed from each of said receptacles thereby respectively to enclose and permit access to the interior thereof.

19. An inventory control system according to claim 18 wherein each said receptacle includes a bottom portion opposite said mouth portion, each said lock

member adapted to secure to the bottom portion of said upper receptacle and the mouth portion of said lower receptacle.

20. An inventory control system according to claim 19 wherein each said receptacle includes a circumferential first outer ridge disposed on said mouth portion and projecting outwardly therefrom and a circumferential second outer ridge disposed on said bottom portion, each of said first and second outer ridges having a ramp face and a locking face, said lock member including a circumferential first and second inner ridges projecting inwardly therefrom, each of said first and second inner ridges having a ramp face and a locking face such that a respective said locking member may be advanced onto an adjacent pair of said receptacles, with the said ramp faces on said first and second inner ridges respectively engaging the ramp faces on said first and second outer ridges until the respective said locking faces advance past one another, said locking faces thereafter engaging one another to prevent separation of said locking member from said adjacent pair of said receptacles and thereby prevent separation of said adjacent pair of receptacles.

21. An inventory control system according to claim 20 wherein each said locking member includes first and second tear-away portions, said first and second inner ridges being disposed respectively on said first and second tear-away portions.

22. An inventory control system according to claim 19 wherein said mouth portion is threaded, said bottom portion adapted to threadably mate with the mouth portion of an adjacent receptacle.

23. An inventory control system according to claim 22 wherein said lock member is adapted to threadably mate onto said mouth portion and said bottom portion.

24. An inventory control system according to claim 23 wherein said mouth portion is provided with radially outwardly projecting first teeth, said lock member including radially inwardly projecting second teeth disposed on said tear-away portion and adapted to interlock with said first teeth in the joined state.

25. An inventory control system according to claim 23 wherein each said receptacle includes a plurality of first teeth disposed on said shoulder and projecting longitudinally thereof, said lock member including longitudinally oriented second teeth disposed on said tear-away portion and adapted to interlock with said first teeth in the joined state.

26. An inventory control system adapted to contain and store items, comprising:

(A) a plurality of receptacles each having a surrounding side wall forming an interior adapted to receive a selected quantity of the items therein, a mouth located at a top portion of said receptacle that is operative to permit access to the interior thereof, and a bottom portion opposite the top portion; and

(B) a lock member adapted to lock an adjacent pair of said receptacles together in a stacked array to define a joined state such that there is a lower receptacle and an upper receptacle, said lock member securing to the top portion of said lower receptacle and to the bottom portion of said upper receptacle and operative to prevent access to the interior of said lower receptacle when in the joined state, said lock member including a tear-away portion that can be removed thereby to release the lower and upper receptacles from one another and allow access to the interior of said lower container.

27. An inventory control system according to claim 26 wherein said mouth portion and said bottom portion of each said receptacle are threaded, said lock member being adapted to threadably mate onto said mouth and bottom portions.

28. An inventory control system according to claim 27 wherein each of said mouth portion and said bottom portions of each said receptacle is provided with radially outwardly projecting first teeth, said lock member including upper and lower radially inwardly projecting second teeth adapted to interlock with respective one of said first teeth in the joined state.

29. An inventory control system according to claim 27 wherein each said receptacle includes a container portion, said mouth and bottom portions joined thereto and extending coaxially therewith to respectively form first and second shoulders, each said receptacle including a plurality of longitudinally projecting first teeth disposed respectively on said first and second shoulders, said lock member including upper and lower longitudinally oriented second teeth adapted to interlock with respective ones of said first teeth in the joined state.

30. An inventory control system according to claim 26 wherein each said receptacle includes a circumferential first outer ridge projecting outwardly from said mouth portion and a circumferential second outer ridge projecting outwardly from said bottom portion, each of said first and second outer ridges having a ramp face and a locking face, said lock member including circumferential first and second inner

ridges projecting inwardly therefrom, said first and second inner ridges each having a ramp face and a locking face such that, when a respective said locking member is advanced onto said upper and lower receptacles, respective said ramp faces engage one another until respective said locking faces advance past one another, said locking faces thereafter engaging one another to prevent separation of said locking member from said receptacles.

31. An inventory control system according to claim 30 wherein each said locking member includes first and second tear-away portions, said first and second inner ridges being disposed respectively on said first and second tear-away portions.

32. A method of storing a bulk quantity of items in selected sub-quantities for inventory, control and dispensing, comprising:

(A) placing a selected sub-quantity of the items of each one of a plurality of receptacles each having an interior;

(B) interlocking said plurality of receptacles in a stacked array such that there is an uppermost receptacle in such a manner so as to prevent access to the interior of each said receptacle except for said uppermost receptacle when in a joined state, adjacent receptacles in said stacked array being interlocked by a lock member so that said adjacent receptacles can only be separated from one another by destroying said lock member; and

(C) providing a reusable lid member to enclose the interior of said uppermost receptacle.

33. A method according to claim 32 including the step of dispensing first the sub-quantity of items in the uppermost receptacle and thereafter separating said uppermost receptacle from the stacked array such that an adjacent receptacle becomes the uppermost receptacle in said stacked array.

34. A method according to claim 32 wherein the items to be stored are pharmaceuticals.